

Private Donations for South Asia Tsunami Relief:

A Suggested Message for the Public



Below please find a suggested message on private donations in support of humanitarian relief efforts following the recent tsunamis in South Asia.

The U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has created this message based on years of experience by the international humanitarian community in dealing with the public's response to overseas disasters. Members of the public often respond to disasters by spontaneously collecting commodities or offering untrained volunteer services, both of which can seriously hamper relief efforts. Past experience has also demonstrated that public statements from U.S. government officials concerning humanitarian aid are often misinterpreted as general pleas for any type of assistance, including commodities and volunteers. The message below is therefore designed to inform the public about the most effective and appropriate ways they can support humanitarian activities in South Asia.

Suggested Donations Message for the Public

- 1. The most effective way the American public can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for their efforts in South Asia is available at www.usaid.gov, Keyword: Tsunami, or by calling the Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI) at 703-276-1914.
- 2. It is a common misperception among the public that all types of assistance are needed immediately following a disaster. This often leads to spontaneous collections of unsolicited commodities and offers of volunteer services, which can impede relief efforts. Therefore, the U.S. Government encourages those who wish to help to make a cash donation to the humanitarian organization of their choice. Cash donations: allow disaster relief professionals to procure the exact commodities needed (often locally in the affected county); reduce the burden on resources that tend to be scarce in disaster settings (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly without transportation costs (which often outweigh the value of the donated commodities); support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- 3. More information on making donations can be found at the following websites:
 - USAID: www.usaid.gov, Keyword: Donations
 - The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or (703) 276-1914
 - InterAction: www.interaction.org **\rightarrow** "Guide to Appropriate Giving"
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.int.